

treaty, he wrote to Madison: "The whole mass of your constituents are looking to you as their last hope to save them from the effects of the avarice and corruption of the first agent [Jay], the revolutionary machinations of others, and the incomprehensible acquiescence of the only honest man who has assented to it. I wish that his honesty and his political errors may not furnish a second occasion to exclaim: 'Curse on his virtues, they have undone his country.' "

Jay's treaty and the insurrection against the Excise Law drew Jefferson into the current of active politics. The Presidential election of 1796 found him the candidate of his party. If we may trust his own protestations, he became a candidate much against his will. To Madison's urgent appeal that he assume the leadership of his party he replied (April, 1795): "There is not another person (beside yourself) in the United States, who being placed at the helm of affairs, my mind would be so completely at rest for the future of our political bark. * * * As to myself, the subject had been thoroughly weighed and decided on, and my retirement from office had been meant from all office, high and low, without exception. I can say, too, with truth, that the subject had not been presented to my mind by any vanity of my own. * * * But the idea being once presented to me, my own quiet required that I should face and examine it. I did so thoroughly, and had no difficulty to see that every reason which had determined me to retire from the office I then held operated more strongly against that which was insinuated from a hostile quarter to be my object. * * * Special considerations which have supervened on my retirement still more insuperably bar the door to it. My health is entirely broken down within the last eight months; my age requires that I shall place my affairs in a clear state; these are sound if taken care of, but capable of considerable dangers if longer neglected; and above all things, the delights I feel in the society of my family and in the agricultural pursuits in which I am so eagerly engaged. The little spice of ambition which I had in my younger days has long since evaporated, and I set still less store by a posthumous than present name. In stating to you the